# A REVIEW OF MIB (MEN IN BLACK)
## A History
### By Linda Murphy

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A lot of people have heard of something about "MIBs" without really knowing any of the details.

The purpose of this article is to acquaint readers with MIBs history, how they are related to the cover-up allegations, along with associated reference material and names of files which contain more current thoughts on the subject.

When the Condon Committee was sampling public attitudes toward UFOs they gave this statement to a cross-section of the American Public: "A government agency maintains a Top Secret file of UFO reports that are deliberately withheld from the public." The respondents were supposed to answer TRUE or FALSE. A substantial majority, sixty-one percent, thought that the statement was true while only thirty-one percent said it was false. Among teenagers, the credibility gap was even wider - 73 percent believed the statement to be true. General opinion studies conducted by the Condon Committee, and other surveys about UFOs came up with the rather paradoxical facts that there were more people who believed in a conspiracy of silence about UFOs than believed in UFOs in the first place.

It has ofen been said that we Americans today are a bit paranoid; that we always tend to believe that something is out to get us, or something is being kept from us. It certainly seems that we were a bit paranoid about UFOs.

Most people thought vaguely in terms of an Air Force conspiracy or a CIA conspiracy or even of a world-wide scientific conspiracy. It was generally acknowledged that the reason behind such a conspiracy was a desire on the part of those in power to hide the "truth" from the public because people would panic if they kney that we really were being visited by superior creatures from another world. Conspiracy theorists constantly hearkened back to the old "War of the Worlds" broadcast, and the panic it started.

Such a belief, however, is rather too simple for the true connoisseur of conspiracies. He has long ago rejected the simple, straightforward Air Force-CIA-science establishment cover-up as too obvious, and really rather ridiculous. The conspiracy connoisseur pointed out quite correctly that no government or group, no matter how powerful, could possibly suppress so much sensational information for so long - no earthly group that is.

If the extraterrestrials WANTED to make themselves known then they would land in a central place, and all the feeble earthly cover-up would simply be blown away. It is out of this sort of background that the legend of the Men In Black arose. It concerns strange little men in dark suits who drive around in big shiny cars and harass people who claimed to have seen a UFO.

The origin of the Men In Black legend can be pinpointed fairly exactly. Back in 1953 a man by the name of Albert K.

Bender was running an oranisation called the International Flying Saucer Bureau (IFSB) and editing a little publication called Space Review that was dedicated to news of flying saucers.

The IFSB had a small membership despite its rather grandiose title, and Space Review reached at best, no more than a few hundred readers. But they were all deeply devoted to the idea that flying saucers were craft from outer space. In common with other true believers, these saucer buffs were convinced that they were in possession of a great truth, while most of the rest of the world remained in darkness and ignorance. They felt very important, and thus it was with a sense of surprise, even shock, that they opened up the October 1953 issue of Space Review and found two unexpected announcements: "LATE BULLETIN. A source which the IFSB considers very reliable has informed us that the investigation of the flying saucer mystery and the solution is approaching its final stages. This same source to whom we had referred data, which had come into our possession, suggested that it was not the proper method and time to publish the data in Space Review."

The second and more shocking item read: "STATEMENT OF IMPORTANCE: The mystery of the flying saucers is no longer a mystery. The source is already known, but any information about this is being withheld by order from a higher source. We would like to print the full story in Space Review, but because of the nature of the information we are very sorry that we have been advised in the negative."

The statement ended with the ominous sentence, "We advise those engaged in saucer work to please be very cautious." Bender then suspended the publication of Space Review, and dissolved the IFSB.

The tone of the announcements would have been familiar to anyone who had much experience with occult organizations. Occultists often claim they are in the possession of some great secret which, for equally secret reasons, they cannot reveal. Even the appeal, "please be very cautious" was not unique. It made those engaged in "saucer work" feel more important. After all, who is going to bother to persecute you if you are just wasting your time?

Shortly after Bender closed down his magazine and organization he gave an interview to a local paper [in] which he asserted that he had been visited by "three men wearing dark suits" who had ordered him "emphatically" to stop publishing material about flying saucers. Bender said that he had been "scared to death" and that he "actually couldn't eat for a couple of days.". Some of Bender's former associates tried to press for a more satisfactory explanation, but to all questions he replied either cryptically or not at all.

This state of affairs created considerable confusions among the flying saucer buffs. What were they to think about such a strange story? Some were openly skeptical of Bender's tale. They said that his publication and organization were losing money and

the tale of the three visitors who "ordered" him to stop publishing was just a face-saving gesture. Yet, as the years went by the "Three Men In Black" began to sound more respectable and they took on a life of their own. Some of Bender's friends first thought that the Men In Black were from the Air Force or the CIA, and indeed Bender's original statements do seem to sound like [the men could have been] government agents. But after a while the Men In Black began to assume a more extraterrestrial, even supernatural air.

Finally in 1963, a full decade after he first told of his mysterious visitors, Albert Bender elaborated further in a book called "Flying Saucers and the Three Men In Black". It was a strange, confused and virtually unreadable book that revealed very little in the way of hard facts, but did significantly enhance the reputation of the Men In Black as extraterrestrials. The book also introduced into the lore "three beautiful women, dressed in tight white uniforms." Like their male counterparts in black, the women in white had "glowing eyes".

But even before the publication of Bender's book in 1963, the Men In Black (or MIBs as they were known to insiders) had already been reported to be visiting others besides Alber Bender. By now they have been reported so often that they have become an established part of the UFO history. The Men In Black, naturally enough,wear black suits. They also usually wear sunglasses, presumably to disguise their "glowing eyes". Most of them are reported to be short and delicately built with olive complections and dark, straight hair. They are often described as "Gypsies" or "Orientals". Most MIBs are reported to travel in groups of three and usually ride around in shiny, new, black cars - often Cadillacs. These cars are even supposed to "smell new". Sometimes the MIBs pose as investigators from the CIA or some other government agency. They may flash official-looking credentials. but these can never be checked out. Occasionally the MIBs display badges withstrange emblems on them, or have unrecognizable symbols painted on their cars. The purpose of the visits seems to be to get people who have seen UFOs to stop talking about them, of somehow to confuse and frighten the witnesses.

People who worry about MIBs tend to lump all sorts of mysterious visitors into the category, even if they don't wear black, have no glowing eyes nor show any of the familiar MIB characteristics. The primary qualification for the Men In Black is that they be of unknown origin, and that they appear to act oddly and vaguely menacing.

Some of those who write about UFOs and other strange phenomena rather casually mention "countless" cases where people have been visited by Men In Black. In reality these "countless cases" are difficult to pin down. In fact, there really seems to be a rather small number of MIB cases where there are any details availabe at all.

The impression given by the writers is that the publicized cases represent only "the tip of the iceberg". Beyond these, say the writers, are many "more sensational" cases, the details of which cannot be revealed for a variety of reasons. In any event solid evidence for a vast number MIB cases is lacking. But we

are, after all, dealing with beliefs as much as with reality, and 'impression' is an important one.

Often the MIB cases that we know of are not quite as sensational as Albert Bender's three visitors, but they are unsettling nevertheless. Take the case of California highway inspector Rex Heflin. On August 3, 1965, Heflin claimed to have taken a series of Polaroid photos of a UFO from his car while parked near the Santa Ana Freeway. The pictures were quite clear and they showed an object shaped rather like a straw hat apparently floating above the ground. These pictures got a great deal of publicity, and are still among the most frequently reprinted UFO photos. Heflin's story was investigated by the Air Force shortly after it became known. It was also looked into by investigators for the Condon Committee during their inquiry. (The committee investigator produced a pretty fair imitation of the photos by suspending the lens cap of his camera in front of his car with a thread and photographing it through the car window.) In addition, a host of unofficial UFO groups tackled the case in their own way.

There was considerable suspicion on the part of official investigators that the photos had been faked, but this was difficult to prove of disprove without the  original pronts. Being Polaroid photos, there were no negatives.

Heflin said that he had turned over three of the four originals to a man (or two men - the stories differ) who claimed that he represented the North American Air Defence Command (NORAD). NORAD denied that they had ever sent out an investigator, or indeed, that they had the slightest interest in the photos. The mysterious person who is alleged to have taken the photos has never been identified.

On October 11, 1967, over two years after Heflin's original sighting, but while the Condon investigation was going on, Heflin reported another encounter with mysterious visitors. A man who said that he was Captain C.H. Edmonds of the Space Systems Division, Systems Command, a unit of the Air Force that had been involved in the first investigation of his UFO photos, came to his home. During the interview the man who called himself Captain Edmonds asked Heflin if he wanted his original photos back. When Heflin said no, the man was "visibly relieved". Inexplicably, the man then began discussing the Bermuda Triangle. This is an area near the island of Bermuda where a number of mysterious disappearances of airplanes and ships have been reported. These disappearances have been linked by some to UFOs, though the connection does not seem very convincing.

While this strange interview was going on, Heflin said that he saw a car parked in the street. It had some sort of lettering on the front door but he could not make it out. To quote the Condon Report description of the incident, "In the back seat could be seen a figure and a violet (not blue) glow, which the witness attributed to instrument dials. He believed he was being photographed or recorded. In the mentime his FM multiplex radio was playing in the living room and during the questioning it made

several loud audible pops." All attempts by the Air Force, various civilian researchers and the Condon Committee itself to find "Captain C. H. Edmonds" failed. As far as can be determined, no such person has ever existed.

A much more bizarre story was supposedly told by an unnamed family who had sighted a UFO. Sometime after the sighting they said that they were visited by a very strange individual. Ivan Sanderson, who reported the incident in his book "Uninvited Visitors", described the individual thus: "almost seven feet tall, with a small head, dead white skin, enormous frame, but pipe-stem limbs." This oddity said he was an insurance investigator and that he was looking for someone who had the same name as the husband of this family. He indicated that the man he was looking for had inherited a great deal of money. Continued Sanderson; "This weird individual just appeared out of the night wearing a strange fur hat with a visor and only a light jacket. He flashed an official-looking card on entry but put it away immediately. Later on when he removed his jacket he disclosed an official-looking gold shield on his shirt which he instantly covered with his hand and removed."

The strange visitor asked some personal questions about the family, but nothing at all about the UFOs. The creepiest part of the whole affair came when the eldest daughter of the family noticed that the "investigator's" tight pants had ridden up his skinny leg, and she saw a green wire running out of his sock, up his leg and into his flesh at two points. After the interview, the "investigator" got into a large, black car which contained at least two other persons, and seemed to disappear on an old dirt road that led from the woods. The car drove off into the night with its headlights off.

In addition to scaring and intimidating people, visits of MIBs are also supposed to produce a variety of unpleasant physical symptoms. Bender said he suffered from headaches, lapses of memory and was plagued by strange odours following the first visit of the Men In Black. Others who say they have had similar visitations have made similar complaints.

Another eerie thing attributed to MIB types, is the ability to look like anyone they want to. Some UFO researchers claim that MIBs have been posing as THEM in order to silence potential witnesses. John Keel, who has written a number of UFO books , said that he had encountered people who refused to believe that he was who he said he was. "Later contactees (those who say they are, somehow or other, in contact with the space people) began to whisper to local UFO investigators that the real John Keel had been kidnapped by a flying saucer and that a cunning android who looked just like me had been substituted in my place. Incredible though it may sound, this was taken very seriously, and later even some of my more rational correspondents admitted that they carefully compared the signatures on my current letters with pre-rumour letters they had received."

As we said earlier, each era tries to explain strange encounters in terms of its own system of beliefs. I have been struch by the similarity of some of these MIB cases with medieval tales of encounters with the devil or some of hes demons. The

devil, for example, was very often described as a man dressed in black. The ability to change shape and appear in any form was commonly attributed to demons, who were able to take the shape of a victim's friends and neighbors and even assume the likeness of angels and saints. Many of those who said that they had met the devil complained of the same range of physical symptoms reported by those who encounered the MIBS.

The shiny new cars associated with MIBs is reminiscent of the Haitian belief in an evil society of sorcerers called "zobops". Haitians say that if you see a big, new car going along the road without a driver, it's under the control of the "zobops", and you had better not try to interfere with it.

Now, I am not trying to imply that the MIBs are agents of the devil, or vice versa, anymore than I would try to say that the little green men from Mars were really the fairy folk of past generations. It is just that our visions and fears often remain the same over the ages, and only our explanations for them change.

Of course, encounters with the devil during the Middle Ages were generally more frightening and overpowering experiences than current experiences with MIBs. Everbody believed in the devil, while today everybody does not believe in the creatures from outer
space. Mideval society took devil stories in dead earnest, and anyone who made such a report might find himself facing a painful death at the stake. The worst one can expect from reporting a MIB encounter is a certain amount of disbelief and ridicule. In general, MIB tales are considered too bizarre even to be reported in local newspapers. They are published only in magazines and books put out for and by UFO enthusiasts.

Usually such publications are provately printed and are read by only a few hundred. A few books however, have been issued by major publishers and have reached a far wider audience. These cases are also occasionally discussed on radio and TV talk shows, so the information gets around more widely than one might think. A lot of people have heard of "something" about MIBs without really knowing any of the details.

There is one incident which bared certain similarities to the traditional MIB case that did receive very wide publicity. This is the story of the "kidnapping" of Betty and Barney Hill. While most of the MIB cases do not appear directly to involve a UFO, this one does. The couple was driving to their home in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, from Canada on the night of September 19, 1961. They were on an isolated stretch of road when they spotted what they thought was a flying saucer abouve them. Then followed two completely blank hours in their lives. They could remember nothing from the time they saw the UFO until a time two hours later when they found themselves in their car several miles down the road from where they had seen the UFO. For months after this experience both of the Hills suffered from severe psychological distress. Finally they consulted a psychiatrist, who hypnotized them, and under hypnosis the Hills revealed a strange story of being kidnapped and taken aboard a flying

saucer.

The Hills didn't rush out and try to get publicity about their experience or write a book about it. In fact, they were remarkably quiet. But the incident did ultimately come to the attention of author John Fuller, who had already written an extremely popular UFO book. With the co-operation of the Hills and of their psychiatrist, Fuller produced another best seller, "The Interrupted Journey", which was first serialized in the now defunct 'Look' magazine.

Though the book is carefully hedged with qualifications that the experience described might be a hallucunation or a dream rather than a "totally real and true experience", the distinct impression left by The Interrupted Journey on thousands of readers was that the experience was a "totally real and true" one.

The people or entities that were supposed to be controlling the spaceship that kidnapped the Hills can be squeezed into the Men In Black lore. Barney Hill described one of his captors as looking like "a red-headed Irishman", hardly a MIB type. But another wore "a shiny black coat", with a black scarf thrown about his neck.

Under hypnosis Hill drew a picture of "the leader" of his abductors. It is a strange insect like face with a wide, thin mouth and huge slanting eyes that seem to go halfway around the creatures' head. The eyes were the most frightening part of the saucer inhabitant's strange physiognomy. Once during a hypnotic session with the psychiatrist Barny Hill cried out in terror, "Oh, those eyes! They're in my brain!" Glowing eyes, you will recall, are considered some of the key characteristics of the typical Man In Black.

Unlike many of the books written by or about people who say that they had encountered the inhabitants of UFOs, The Interrupted Journey carries real conviction. One gets the feeling that the Hills and Fuller are intelligent, sincere and sane people who really believe that what they described is what actually did happen.

So this idea was planted in the minds of thousands of readers of The Interrupted Journey: UFOs can land, the extraterrestrials can kidnap ordinary people, subject them to a degrading and almost brutal examination and then wipe all memory of the incident from their minds, leaving behind only an unexplained sense of anxiety bordering on panic.

Well, what does all of this mean? Are we being invaded by some weird bunch of extraterrestrials who have in the words of the "Shadow" radio show, "the power to cloud men's minds"? Frankly the evidence does not support such an alarming conclusion.

Are all the stories hoaxes and hallucinations? Psychiatrists could certainly have a field day with many of these accounts. Symptoms such as loss of memory, severe anxiety and other unpleasant reactions strongly suggest that many of those who report such experiences are in a disturbed psychological state, though they would claim the disturbance was caused by the encounter with the strange visitor. In any event they do not make

the most reliable of witnesses. Some of the other stories are almost certainly sheer fiction, made up either by some practical joker or by a writer of sensational books.

Whether all the stories are real of unreal is not a question that we can answer conclusively here. The point is that we Americans are building a mythology for ouselves, just as the Europeans did with their tales of dragons, ogres and elves, and just as all people have done in all parts of the world in all ages.

We have often prided ourselves on being a practical, hardheaded, no-nonsense sort of people who were immune to the irrational fears and superstitious notions of less clear-sighted and realistic folk. This proposition is demonstrably untrue and perhaps we are better off for it. Our monsters, our space people, even if they don't exist, if indeed they are rather silly, also make life more interisting and exciting.

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